

## *Fact or Fable? The Consequences of Migration for Educational Achievement and Labor Market Participation*

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This paper explores the foundations of Samoan attitudes to education, the ways these influenced decisions to migrate to New Zealand, and whether or not those decisions have been justified by the subsequent educational and labor market experiences of their New Zealand-born descendants. The first part establishes how, when, and why Samoans came to value formal education and to believe that it could transform life chances and career prospects. It shows why these convictions about education led people to believe that migration to New Zealand would ensure their children had access to a system of formal education that would improve their life chances.

The second part of the paper examines whether early migrant parents' suppositions were correct. This is done by comparing the formal educational attainments, patterns of labor market participation, and income distributions of a cohort of New Zealand- and island-born Samoans aged between 40 and 49 years and resident in New Zealand in 1996. Data from the 1996 *Census of Population and Dwellings* were used, courtesy of Statistics New Zealand.

The comparison of the situations of the age 40–49 cohort was intended to capture the situations of the children of those early migrants, who were born in New Zealand between 1947 and 1956, and to compare their situations with those of Samoan-born residents at similar stages in their careers and life cycles. Individuals in this age group would have entered similar labor markets (at different times) and would be expected to be approaching the highest points in their career paths, whereas comparable

groups from later cohorts would enter the same labor markets but may still be upwardly mobile.

If the parents' suppositions about the benefits of education were correct, there would be clear differences between the educational attainments and labor market situations of the two groups of children. Those born and raised in New Zealand would be expected to have higher incomes, more prestigious occupations, and higher levels of occupational participation. If these suppositions were incorrect, there would be few clear differences between the two groups' situations in the labor market, and the patterns would need to be explained in other terms, which might include the influences of Samoan and New Zealand cultures.

Our analysis of census data establishes that the migrants' aspirations for their children were only partly achieved and we conclude by identifying and reviewing other factors that may have produced the patterns revealed.

#### EDUCATION IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SAMOA

Samoans have valued formal education since shortly after continuing contact with Europeans began in the early nineteenth century. The most influential of these Europeans were Christian missionaries who introduced religious beliefs that produced a crucial event in Samoan culture history. Missionary discourse quite deliberately associated the new religion with "spiritual enlightenment" as in books such as William Wyatt Gill's *From Darkness to Light in Polynesia* (1894). The new religion became associated, in the Samoan mind and language, with the end of the period of "spiritual darkness" (*aso o le pouliuli*), and the commencement of "spiritual enlightenment" (*aso o le malamalama*). The new era also became known as the time of truth (*aso o tala lelei*).

The trappings of the new religion, including its doctrines, institutions, hierarchies, and offices also became associated with "enlightenment." Of these institutions, education became increasingly significant in Samoa because the early Christian missions were highly influential in providing education, in the belief that "schools constitute one of the most important departments of missionary labour" (Buzacott 1866, 63).

The missionaries were not impressed with the style and content of the informal education they found in Samoa. The following passage, from the pioneer missionary J B Stair, indicates their difficulties with the moral content of informal education:

Children were subject to a strange training, or as a rule brought up without any training at all, save such as tended to evil. At one time they were indulged in their every wish, at another severely beaten for the most trivial offence, and then shortly after an oven of food was prepared, as a peace offering to appease their offended dignity. In consequence of the manner in which families usually lived the children were accustomed to witness all kinds of evil and encouraged to follow deception as a virtue, the only evil attaching to a crime being that of detection. Hence by example, as well as by teaching, children were trained in the habits of deception by their parents and others, an acquisition of which they usually proved themselves but too apt scholars. (1897, 178)

The missionary view of the substantive content of education was only marginally more optimistic, as a passage from the missionary George Turner suggests:

Girls always, and boys for four or five years, were under the special charge of the mother, and followed her in her domestic avocations. The girl was taught to draw water, gather shellfish, make mats and native cloth. The boy after a time followed his father, and soon became useful in planting, fishing, house-building and all kinds of manual labor. Boys were accustomed to club together, and wander about the settlement, the plantation or in the bush. (1884, 84)

At the same time, the missionaries were increasingly aware of a growing Samoan interest in reading and writing as John Williams, the architect of the Samoan mission, noted:

On my arrival on board the vessel I found people from the neighbouring valley were waiting for & wished me to go on shore there. The Chief assured us that himself & nearly all his people were Christians, that they had erected a large Chapel in imitation of the one built by the teachers at Savai [*sic*], from which place he had lately come & brought the *lotu* religion with him. He himself had been taught by the Missionaries, & to convince us of the truth of what he said, he placed his hands before him in the form of a book & repeated a Chapter out of the Tahitian spelling book. (Moyle 1984, 108)

However, the missionaries may not have fully understood the basis of the Samoans' interest. Far from being passive receptors of "sacred truths," Samoans actively sought means of advancing their secular interests and power within the Samoan polity. A significant part of their interest in the mission teachings had secular roots. Williams understood this and noted in his diaries, "Nor . . . did the Samoans embrace Christianity lightly. They did so with deliberation and for the most materialistic of reasons"

(Moyle 1984, 17). Malietoa Vaiinupo, for instance, embraced Williams' mission because he believed it to be the fulfilment of an earlier prophecy of the goddess Nafanua and the means of his domination of all Samoa (Meleisea 1987, 58). Malietoa, to Williams' disappointment, kept the missionary teachers in his district for the first two years, hoping to capture the advantages they brought for his followers.

When other chiefs, including some of Malietoa's rivals, saw Malietoa controlling the teachers and consolidating his power in the process, they became impatient for London Missionary Society teachers. They embraced other faiths and other individuals that offered them benefits, including the means of trading with the outside world, which they believed would be gained from the new knowledge. In the process, as Meleisea noted, "Chiefly competition for access to the new religion, probably with the hope of controlling and benefitting from it, introduced sectarian rivalry into Samoa" (Meleisea 1987, 58, 13).

For whatever reason, the missionaries believed that literacy and numeracy were the keys to the progress of the mission in Samoa, and Williams' enthusiasm for the project was apparent.

Thus the word runs & is glorified. Now is the time for Missionaries to come. The field is indeed literally ripe. . . . I therefore got the Chiefs together again & had my last interview with Malietoa. . . . I then proposed to him to encourage the people to learn, especially his own sons & daughters for a knowledge of reading & writing would be an invaluable acquisition to them & to the Islands in general. He said he was aware of it, but the Samoa people were a people soon tired. They wanted patience, but he would insist on some learning which would act as a stimulus to others. (Moyle 1984, 156)

Williams and his associates sought to transform key elements of the Samoan worldview and life-style. To achieve this quickly involved the transmission of new "knowledges" that in turn required new skills, including reading and writing, and those in turn required a new, more formal style of education. To deliver this moral, secular, and religious education, however, missions had first to train the teachers who would provide it—both within the Samoan mission field and later beyond it in the Western Pacific (Crocombe 1982). To this end, missionaries embarked on a major education program.

Thus, it was the London Missionary Society, with a large and growing staff of missionaries and teachers, plus an educationist and a printer that made the

first serious attempt to Christianise the Samoans in belief and action. *Immediate attention was given to the problem of illiteracy. . . . Indeed, the ability to read was made a prerequisite of church membership, a rule to be waived only when blindness or old age made it inapplicable.* Years of toil went into mastering the language and translating the Bible, catechisms, sermons and other indispensable literature; and no effort was spared to provide reading lessons for all who would attend. (Gilson 1970, 95; emphasis added)

After 1845 the Malua theological seminary was made responsible for training teachers, so that every village would have a Samoan pastor to look after the parishes and to provide basic teaching. This was to be achieved by basic formal education, which was to be achieved in the following way:

The pastors and their wives ran schools for both children and adults in village through the nineteenth century and up until the 1950s most Samoans were educated by village pastors. In the pastors' schools, people were instructed to read and write in Samoan; they learned basic arithmetic, scripture and church music. The pastor taught the boys whatever practical skills he had learnt, while his wife taught the girls papālagi domestic arts. (Meleisea 1987, 59–60).

By 1850, the mission had 150 teachers in the Samoan mission field. As the number grew, English missionaries could focus on teaching in the church schools and colleges, which were to become a major part of the missionary program. Aside from the Malua Theological Seminary, they established the Leulumoega Fou High School and the Papauta Girls' School.

For the Samoans themselves, the arrival of Christian religion came to mark a crucial event in their culture history: the end of the “time of darkness” (*aso o le pouliuli*) and the beginning of the “enlightened times” (*aso o le malamalama*). The early association of literacy, and formal education more generally, with Christian religion explains the prestige assigned to formal education. It signaled a desire to break with “darkness” and to embrace the new “enlightenment” and was the path to that enlightenment. For Samoans, its association with admission to positions in the Christian laity and clergy, and the scarcity of opportunities for advanced education, further enhanced its status and ensured that it became a sought-after “commodity” in nineteenth-century Samoa. Its status was, however, further enhanced by events that occurred toward the end of the nineteenth century.

## EDUCATION IN TWENTIETH CENTURY SAMOA

Secular schooling was first established in the late 1800s, when it was associated with and available mainly to Europeans and part-Samoans who were increasingly the power brokers in colonial Samoa, a situation that undoubtedly enhanced the status of education as a valued commodity. Education was delivered at the beginning of the twentieth century in four so-called Foreign Schools: "Government School, Malifa School (Misses Armstrong), Catholic Mission School for boys (Marist Brothers) and the Catholic School for Girls (Marist Sisters). All others are native schools" (Cyclopedia 1983, 65).

The scarcity of opportunities for Samoans in these academies is clear from the statistics for the government school, which in 1906 numbered only 1 Samoan among its 93 pupils (Cyclopedia 1983). Later, Samoans and part-Samoans were led to adopt European surnames to qualify for entry into these schools (Va'a 1992, 467). The significance of the Foreign Schools lay in the fact that they offered formal education in the German and English languages, both of which were the keys to power and influence in the colonial administrations that controlled Samoa from 1900 to 1962.

Over time, differences between Europeans, part-Europeans, and Samoans were preserved and entrenched by various colonial governments. People of mixed Samoan-European descent were classified either native or European on the bases of ancestry and political criteria. Part-Samoans who were classified as European "had legal privileges which permitted them special political representation, the right to buy and consume alcohol, and rights of access to English-language schools; and from the late 1940s to secondary education in New Zealand" (Meleisea 1987, 116, 150).

As a consequence of the restriction of advanced education in the English and German language to Europeans, part-Europeans, and those associated with the Christian ministry, Samoan society became increasingly differentiated. Most Samoans continued to be educated in pastors' schools in the Samoan language, which in most cases limited their vocational choices and limited their participation in government and commerce. The situation was to be transformed in the period after the Second World War as pressure for decolonization grew.

The post-World War II New Zealand administration was required by the terms of its United Nations trusteeship to provide the trappings of a

modern state, and as independence approached, “an accelerated education programme was introduced for Samoan children. Prior to this there had only been restricted opportunities for Samoans to obtain a Western Education in the English language and many of the established schools had only catered to children with European and Chinese surnames” (Meleisea 1987, 153).

From 1949 on, the New Zealand administration responded to Samoan demand for more accessible secular government schooling and initiated primary and junior secondary education in rural areas and a limited number of places in secondary education in Apia and Savai'i. This action was paralleled by the growth of advanced places in religious academies run by the Methodist, Roman Catholic, Latter-day Saints, and Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Formal education's continued association with “modernity” and with power in religious, ethnic, civil, and commercial hierarchies ensured that its early high status was preserved in independent Samoa. The Samoans' commitment to education is reflected in the continued willingness of villages and districts to provide land and school buildings for the children in return for the government's provision of teachers' salaries. The same commitment saw villagers with low incomes raising and spending large amounts of money on school construction, extension, and maintenance over long periods.

## EDUCATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The demand for secular education increased rapidly as it became clear that it was an important factor in social mobility in modern Western Samoa. The newly independent government came under immense popular pressure to extend the secular education initiated by the New Zealand government in the closing years of its trusteeship. A combination of three factors shaped the Western Samoan educational policy: a commitment to universal basic education, increasing population growth rates, and limited growth in education budgets.

By 1951, improvements in public health had increased annual population growth rates to 3.7 percent and from then until 1966, when out-migration had begun to reduce growth rates, ran at around 3.15 percent (WSDS 1979, 6–7, 15). One consequence was rapid growth of the proportion of population aged under fifteen years, which had reached 51.3 percent in 1966 (WSDS 1979, 34). Increasing demand was placed on the

government to provide the resources to extend the availability of formal education to meet the desire for unrestricted access to education for all (Pitt 1970, 218).

The Western Samoan government's commitment to universal education, and its inability to increase education expenditure indefinitely, meant that it had little option but to provide less education for more people. Competition for places in intermediate and secondary education intensified as the numbers of primary school graduates increased, while the numbers of intermediate and secondary places remained either constant or grew only slowly. With population growth rates hitting ever higher levels, it was clear that the situation would get progressively worse. In the circumstances, successive governments' commitment to universal basic education would inevitably frustrate their parallel desire to provide higher education for more citizens.

Even the willingness of villages and districts to provide new school buildings and teachers' homes could not overcome the problems that lay with successive governments' inability to train to higher levels the growing numbers of teachers required to staff secondary schools and to pay them appropriately. The most highly qualified teachers found that their qualifications were portable and would be rewarded more highly outside Western Samoa. As growing numbers of teachers left the education service to go overseas, the situation became worse rather than better.

This situation was particularly acute in the secondary education service, where Samoan teachers with university degrees and teaching qualifications took advantage of opportunities to work abroad, thereby weakening the secondary sector. Volunteer teachers from organizations such as Volunteer Service Abroad and the United States Peace Corps were used to fill gaps, but such strategies were ultimately unsustainable.

Those Samoans who had come to connect advanced formal education with political power and material prosperity were increasingly concerned about the declining availability and quality of secondary education in Samoa (Pitt and Macpherson 1974, 13). The scarcity of places in advanced secondary education, and the suspicion that the entrance examinations were manipulated to provide opportunities for the children of the wealthy and those with political connections, left many in rural areas skeptical about the possibilities of getting adequate secondary education for their children.

The final consideration was the absence of tertiary education in Samoa. While Samoa had several tertiary institutions, including theological seminaries, a teacher training institution, a nursing school, and a trade train-



ing institute, at the time, the absence of a university was a major gap. Many teachers and other professionals with tertiary qualifications obtained overseas returned to Samoa to serve their “bonds” and then left again for higher salaries and more interesting work available elsewhere. For many Samoans, the apparent ease with which those people moved around confirmed the advantages of overseas tertiary education.

### *Migration and Education*

Against this background Samoans began to consider the educational possibilities offered by migration in the period leading up to and after independence. For many, especially village Samoans, migration offered two principle sets of advantages: higher, safer incomes and free, universal education to university level. For many young parents and prospective parents, the second possibility was very important and assured them that their children would have opportunities they themselves had not enjoyed.

Beyond the benefits that accrued to the children, another set of potential benefits to the family made the opportunities attractive. Education of individuals would in turn increase public esteem for the families, and even villages, to which they belonged, as well as the human and financial resources available to them to meet their obligation to support kin whose sacrifices had made their achievements possible.

Their commitment to these beliefs was such that they took the risk of abandoning a well-understood and relatively secure way of life for one that was both less understood and less secure. In a major national survey of Samoan migrants in New Zealand in the early 1970s, educational opportunities surfaced as major factors in decisions to migrate (Pitt and Macpherson 1973; 1974). Interviews also revealed a strong desire to have children succeed in secondary and tertiary education and to gain access to professional occupations they believed were inaccessible in Western Samoa. A later survey of migrants in Wellington revealed similar enthusiasm for, and commitment to, education (NZDL 1979). These sentiments, and the reasoning behind them, are explored in the novelist Albert Wendt’s works *Sons for the Return Home* and *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (1973; 1979).

### FACT OR FAINT HOPE?

Were these early parents’ aspirations for their children justified? If this were so, the levels of formal education attained by those born in New Zealand could be expected to be higher than those of their counterparts

born and raised in Samoa, and their incomes and patterns of labor market participation could also be expected to differ.

In what follows the New Zealand- and Samoa-born cohorts are compared to see whether the decisions parents took all those years ago were validated in terms of their children's educational achievements, incomes, occupational status, and mobility. Within each cohort the respective positions of men and women are considered to establish whether and how gender made a difference to patterns of participation.

### *Tertiary Education*

Of particular interest to migrants was the prospect of gaining tertiary education, which in Samoa had been mostly available to a largely urban and part-Samoan elite who had, as a consequence, been able to consolidate their hold on power and influence. New Zealand education offered the prospect of breaking this group's hold on power. Data for persons aged 40–49 years from the 1996 New Zealand census give some insight into the relative levels of formal education attained by these groups.

From table 1 it is clear that migrant parents' expectations were met in significant measure. Among 40–49-year-old Samoans, those born in New Zealand were almost twice as likely to have tertiary qualifications as their Samoan-born cousins. The proportions of people with tertiary qualifications were significantly higher for men than for women in the same age group in the New Zealand-born population, but only marginally higher in the Samoa-born population.

Insofar as this is true, those Samoans who migrated early and had their children in New Zealand have ensured that their children are more likely to have gained tertiary qualifications than children born in Samoa. Where all other things are equal, this educational "capital" would be converted into other forms of capital that can be transmitted to descendants in the form of cultural capital or wealth. The educational advantage is not confined simply to the early migrants' children, but is transferred to subsequent generations. However, it must be weighed against the social costs borne by children who grew up as members of a generally disadvantaged ethnic minority. This issue will be discussed in greater detail later.

### *Occupational Distribution*

Migrant parents did not, however, seek education for education's sake. Most expected that this educational advantage would improve their children's life chances. But this expectation rested on the assumption that

Table 1. Tertiary Qualifications of Samoans 40–49 Years of Age Resident in New Zealand in 1996.

	New Zealand–Born		Samoa–Born	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>Males</i>				
Tertiary	198	39.3	738	19.3
No tertiary	306	60.7	3,078	80.7
Total	504	100	3,816	100
<i>Females</i>				
Tertiary	138	30.7	774	20.2
No tertiary	312	69.3	3,063	79.8
Total	450	100	3,837	100
<i>Combined</i>				
Tertiary	336	35.2	1,512	19.8
No tertiary	618	64.8	6,141	80.2
Total	954	100	7,653	100

Source: Statistics New Zealand 1996.

their children would face no discrimination in the labor market. As Macpherson noted in the late 1970s, improved formal qualifications would only be converted into improved rates of participation in the workforce where dominant group prejudice is absent or minimal (1977).

If prejudice and discrimination were as widespread as early studies of gatekeepers' attitudes suggested, the differential between levels of formal education for New Zealand–born and Samoa-born Samoans would not be reflected in differential patterns of labor market participation (Trlin 1971a, 1971b, 1972; Trlin and Johnson 1973; Spoonley 1975, 1978). All would be expected to have encountered prejudice irrespective of their qualifications. As table 2 shows, however, these differentials are preserved.

The differentials evident in the formal qualifications are reflected in occupational distribution. Three times as many New Zealand–born as Samoa-born Samoans have professional occupations, and two-and-a-half times as many are found in more prestigious white-collar occupations,

which tend also to be more secure with the recent decline of manufacturing industries.

The existence of differentials between the two groups warrants comment because the prejudice against Samoans, reported at the time, might have been expected to be directed against all Samoans. The differentials in the patterns of employment in the two groups may reflect the shortage of certain skills in the labor market in the 1960s and 1970s. Even those who were prejudiced against Samoans may have been prevented by the need for their skills from discriminating against them in the labor market.

Marked gender differences occur in occupational distributions. New Zealand-born men and women have been more successful in finding professional occupations: 36.1 percent and 35.7 percent of New Zealand-born men and women respectively, and 9.3 percent and 15.3 percent of

Table 2. Occupational Distribution of New Zealand- and Samoa-Born Samoans Aged 40-49 Years Resident in New Zealand in 1996.

<i>Occupations</i>	New Zealand-Born		Samoa-Born	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Legislative, administrative and management	93	11.8	132	2.5
Technical and associated professionals	90	11.5	198	3.7
Professionals	99	12.6	315	5.9
<i>Professional subtotal</i>	282	35.9	645	12.1
Clerks	135	17.2	471	8.8
Service and sales	87	11.1	561	10.5
<i>White-collar subtotal</i>	504	64.1	1,677	31.5
Agriculture and fisheries	21	2.7	96	1.8
Trades	69	8.8	471	8.8
Plant or machine operators	84	10.7	1,464	27.5
Elementary occupations	57	7.3	918	17.2
Not specified	51	6.5	702	13.2
<i>Total</i>	786	100.0	5,328	100.0

*Source:* Data from Statistics New Zealand 1996.

*Note:* Some discrepancies occur because of rounding.

their Samoa-born counterparts. Similar differentials are found for white-collar occupations: for men, 41 percent of New Zealand-born and 15.4 percent of Samoa-born; for women, 67.9 percent of New Zealand-born and 27.4 percent of Samoa-born. The causes of the gender differentials are not immediately clear. They may reflect a nationally gendered labor market, some tendency to value the education of men more highly than that of women, or, as Lerner suggested, some combination of these factors (1991).

### *Income Distribution*

If the expectations of the early migrant parents were to be met, the differentials evident in occupational distribution would be reflected in the incomes of the respective subpopulations. These are compared in table 3.

New Zealand-born Samoans earn significantly more than their Samoa-born cousins in this cohort. Whereas only around 43.2 percent of New Zealand-born Samoans earn less than \$30,000, 69.4 percent of those born in Samoa fall into this category. The same is true in the middle-income bands (\$30,001–\$50,000), where 35.2 percent of New Zealand-born Samoans are found but only 17.5 percent of the Samoa-born. As one would expect, the same disparities are found in the high-income

Table 3. Income Distribution of Samoans Aged 40–49 Years Resident in New Zealand in 1996.

Income NZ\$	New Zealand-Born		Samoa-Born	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<15,000	66	10.3	720	16.4
15,001–30,000	210	32.9	2,328	53.0
30,001–40,000	156	24.4	567	12.9
40,001–50,000	69	10.8	204	4.6
50,001–70,000	66	10.3	69	1.6
70,001–100,000	21	3.3	15	0.3
>100,001	15	2.3	3	0.1
Not specified	36	5.6	489	11.1
Total	639	100.0	4,395	100.0

Source: Data from Statistics New Zealand 1996.

bands (<\$50,001) where 15.9 percent of the New Zealand-born are found and 1.9 percent of the Samoa-born.

Generally, parents' expectations that migration would result in higher incomes have been borne out. But this effect is not limited to this generation. While those who earn more may not, for reasons connected with Samoan custom, be able to save more, they may be able to invest more in their children's education and to confer their own initial advantage on their children, thus cementing in place the intergenerational accumulation and transmission of educational capital. Because of the gendered nature of the labor market, however, this was more marked for parents of male children than for those of female children. The disparities between the incomes of New Zealand-born men and all other categories are presented in table 4.

New Zealand-born men apparently benefit from being born in New Zealand and from being male. Only 33.6 percent of New Zealand-born males are in the low-income band (<\$30,000) compared with almost 66 percent of New Zealand-born females, 72 percent of the island-born males, and 86 percent of island-born females. This is also true for the middle-income band (\$30,001–\$50,000), which contains 43.2 percent of

Table 4. Income Distribution of Male and Female Samoans Aged 40–49 Years and Resident in New Zealand in 1996.

Income NZ\$	New Zealand-born				Samoa-born			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<15,000	21	5.6	45	19.7	351	15.5	369	22.4
15,001–30,000	105	28.0	105	46.1	1,278	56.5	1,050	63.9
30,001–40,000	105	28.0	51	22.4	396	17.5	171	10.4
40,001–50,000	57	15.2	12	5.3	168	7.4	36	2.2
50,000–70,000	54	14.4	12	5.3	60	2.7	9	0.5
70,001–100,000	18	4.8	3	1.3	9	0.4	6	0.4
>100,000	15	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.2
Total	375	100.0	228	100.0	2,262	100.0	1,644	100.0

Source: Data from Statistics New Zealand 1996.

New Zealand-born males but only 27.7 percent of the New Zealand-born females, 24.9 percent of island-born males, and 12.6 percent of island-born females. Likewise, the upper-income bands (>\$50,001) contain 8.8 percent of New Zealand-born males and only 1.3 percent of New Zealand-born females, 0.4 percent of island-born males, and 0.6 percent of island-born females.

Although simply being born in New Zealand improved the probability of earning higher incomes, greater benefits accrued to men than to women. Why this is true is not immediately clear, although two factors seem possible. First, some thirty years ago when these individuals were making career choices, the labor market was undersupplied, wages were relatively high, and the premiums for obtaining additional education were possibly smaller. Second, the widespread and deliberate promotion of equal educational opportunity had not gained the momentum of later years.

### *Employment Status*

The distribution of income, while significant in its own right, is not necessarily a good indication of *security* of income. Since 1984, the New Zealand economy has been dramatically restructured, with profound effects for the size, shape, and structure of the labor market (Ongley 1991, 1996; Roper 1993; Rudd and Roper, 1997; Kelsey, 1993). The changes bring into question whether the investments made by early migrants in their children's education—by migrating—made them more secure in New Zealand's contracting labor market than those born in Samoa.

Although less than perfect, some indication of relative security is gained by comparing the employment status of the New Zealand- and Samoa-born cohorts in 1996, after twelve years of restructuring (table 5).

New Zealand-born men and women are less likely to be unemployed than their Samoa-born counterparts in our cohort, with the differential significantly greater for men than for women. The same holds for those outside the labor force, and again significant differences can be seen between the levels for men and for women. The people in both sectors are dependent on state-provided income and cannot increase their income in the ways open to those in paid employment.

Since the level of these benefits has been pegged to the notional average wage to encourage those who can to return to paid work, by definition those in these sectors will earn less than the average wage. The nature and level of state-provided income means that recipients of these incomes

have more difficulty obtaining credit and securing mortgages and are less likely to be able to accumulate property against which they can borrow in the future and which they can transmit to their children. The longer anyone derives income solely from these sources, the greater their disadvantage in relation to employed people, and the greater the consequences for their children.

Exacerbating this disadvantage is the stronger sense of personal and financial commitment to their island-resident kin on the part of the Samoa-born cohort. They not only have lower incomes because of their labor market participation pattern, but feel bound to commit more of that income to island-resident kin (Macpherson 1992). Income so diverted precludes their making investments in such things as education because they must first consider the needs of their nonresident kin (Larner 1991). New Zealand-born Samoans, whose links to the island communities from which their parents came are more attenuated, are less likely to have to consider these issues when they spend their income. This situation is even more pronounced for women, who are expected to be more committed remitters (Shankman 1976; Larner 1991).

Table 5. Employment Status of Male and Female Samoans Aged 40–49 Years and Resident in New Zealand in 1996.

<i>Employment Status</i>	New Zealand-born				Samoa-born			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self-employed	105	20.2	36	7.6	264	6.6	105	2.6
Wage and salary	309	59.5	300	63.7	2,340	58.4	2,091	52.1
Unpaid family								
worker	3	0.6	12	2.5	39	1.0	39	1.0
Unemployed	30	5.8	18	3.8	444	11.1	336	8.4
Not in labor								
force	72	13.9	105	22.3	921	23.0	1,446	36.0
Total	519	100.0	471	100.0	4,008	100.0	4,017	100.0

*Source:* Statistics New Zealand 1996.



## OTHER FACTORS

This, however, is only part of the picture. Although by these measures some of those born in New Zealand are undoubtedly better educated, hold more prestigious occupations, and are better paid than their Samoan-born counterparts, this says nothing of the *level of expectation* of the parents who migrated. The studies just mentioned revealed that many migrants expected that all, or at least a significant proportion, of those who were exposed to longer periods of superior formal education in New Zealand would succeed.

The assumption that there was an inevitable and direct relationship between the exposure to overseas education and improved life chances was shown to be false. Because many children in this cohort did not measure up to the levels of their parents' expectations, the question is *why*. It might be argued that the expectation of universal success was unrealistic, if not naïve, but it is not hard to see how it became part of the hopes of early migrants. Most of those who enjoyed political and commercial power and influence in post-World War II Samoa had been educated by New Zealanders in Samoa or in New Zealand. What might explain the gap between expectations and attainments in New Zealand?

Four sets of structural factors—the content and organization of New Zealand formal education, the New Zealand labor market, ethnic discrimination in the labor market, and the linkages between home and migrant populations—seem to explain a significant part of the gap and are explored next. To these individual motivation might be added: clearly not all families and individuals sought professional jobs and high incomes.

### *The Organization of Formal Education*

Part of the explanation is that Samoan parents confused educational access and educational outcomes. Many assumed that better access would produce better outcomes. Different groups of New Zealand-born children took their cultural capital to various institutions within the education system. Where that cultural capital was valued equally, and where all of the schools were equally effective in facilitating learning, better outcomes did occur. Yet the New Zealand education system to which this cohort was first exposed some thirty-five years ago was decidedly Eurocentric and monocultural, and some schools were demonstrably more effective than others in responding to the presence of Samoan children and enhancing their educational performance.

The curriculum valued the English language and “European” knowledge more highly than other languages and knowledges. While French, German, and Latin were taught alongside English to “brighter” students in “academic streams,” Polynesian languages, with the occasional exception of Maori, were virtually unheard in schools at the time. In New Zealand schools to which this cohort was exposed in the 1960s, knowledge of certain places, their histories, geographies, economies, and societies was given more prominence and used as the basis of measures of academic ability. Much of this foundation information was part of the Pakeha cultural repertoire, but Samoans and others had to acquire it from scratch.

Those who were unable to draw on these culturally bounded bodies of knowledge invariably found themselves at some disadvantage. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s there is little doubt that many Samoan children were alienated by their experiences in a system that did not value their knowledge and language skills, and whose gatekeepers held low expectations of their achieving educational success. Many left school early, with minimal or no formal qualifications.

Furthermore, as Ramsay showed in a study of Auckland schools attended by Pacific Islanders, some schools were much more effective than others in facilitating learning (1987). Ramsay’s large, well-designed study demonstrated conclusively that schools drawing students from the same cultural and socioeconomic catchment area showed significant variations in educational outcomes, which were in turn related to the expectations of their principals and senior staff as well as their organization and management. Educational success was related not solely to the duration of a child’s education, but also to the quality of the school that child was required to attend.

### *The Labor Market*

That more New Zealand-born and educated children did not attain the level of success anticipated by their migrant parents may be partly explained by the relatively strong labor market that existed when members of the cohort completed their secondary education in the decade between 1963 and 1973. During that period, unemployment ran at historically low levels of under 1 percent, most of which was transitory unemployment caused as people moved between jobs (SNZ 1997, 343).

Full employment and high wages, protected by tariff barriers and import licensing, ensured all who wished to work of jobs and, even in rel-

actively unskilled work, wages and conditions were relatively attractive. Wages and conditions were protected by a powerful and well-organized labor movement, with all employees in many occupations required by law to belong to the appropriate union. The unions enjoyed monopoly coverage of labor in their industrial sectors, and were able to negotiate comprehensive, national collective agreements annually from a position of considerable strength.

In the prevailing circumstances, and given successive governments' apparent determination to continue to run a highly regulated and protected economy, as well as their willingness to borrow overseas to sustain a buoyant domestic economy, the value of an investment in advanced education may well have seemed marginal to many of the Samoan cohort as they contemplated their post-secondary options between 1963 and 1973.

Pivotal decisions were also frequently influenced by a lack of information about the costs of tertiary education. In the absence of large numbers of role models, and of reliable, readily available information about tertiary education charges and available subsidies, many parents and intending students made inaccurate assumptions about the real costs and benefits of tertiary education. Church-sponsored workshops for parents of children completing secondary education in the early 1970s revealed that parents overestimated the costs and underestimated the longer term benefits of tertiary education. Only later, as the number of Samoan graduates began to increase, did this situation begin to change.

### *Ethnic Discrimination*

The failure of New Zealand-educated children in this cohort to achieve the positions to which they, and their parents, aspired was due in part to racism on the part of gatekeepers when they entered the labor market. Researchers found evidence of discrimination against Pacific Islanders by gatekeepers in a number of areas, including employment (Spoonley 1975, 1978) and housing (MacDonald nd). Social stereotypes based on presumed characteristics of island-born migrants were applied to those born in New Zealand and undoubtedly constrained their prospects of occupational mobility, at least for a period (Graves 1984a, 1984b; RRC 1982; Trlin 1982).

At the time, the concentration of Pacific Islanders in certain parts of cities and industrial sectors (Trlin 1971a, 1971b, 1974, 1976, 1977) meant that few members of the dominant group had opportunities to recognize and appreciate the nature and extent of differences between the

supposed characteristics of the island-born and the locally born subpopulations. They apparently continued to act as if there were no differences, with inevitable consequences for the New Zealand-born population.

Only when New Zealand-born and educated Pacific Islanders began to appear in significant numbers in highly visible service occupations, national professional and sporting arenas, and in various roles in the mass media did contrary evidence become apparent. The new awareness brought about a change in attitudes on the part of many New Zealanders and, most significantly, on the part of gatekeepers in labor and other markets. More recently it has led to the increased occupational and spatial mobility of Pacific Islanders.

### *Linkages between Home and Migrant Communities*

The third part of the explanation lies in the nature of links between Samoan migrants and their families and villages of origin. The strong bonds between migrants and their communities of origin have been reflected in a stream of remittances in cash and kind that flowed from the migrants to their nonmigrant kin. As this newfound wealth began to flow into families and villages and was invested in various traditional, and some new, forms of physical and sociopolitical capital, competition between families and villages intensified and the demand for remittances increased (Pitt 1970; Macpherson 1973; Shankman 1976).

New and larger homes built with imported materials, vehicles, boats, tools, small trade stores and other businesses, and more elaborate and more expensive *fa'alavelave*, funerals, weddings, and baptisms sparked this escalating competition within and between families. New, larger churches, pastors' houses, schools, women's committee houses, and contributions to pastors, annual intra- and inter-village church collections occasioned escalating competition between villages in Samoa.

Migrants who found themselves under increasing pressure to meet steadily rising expectations of remittances were frequently tempted to allow, even encourage, their children to enter the workforce earlier than they may have planned when they arrived in New Zealand. It was relatively easy to justify these decisions because their children had already, in many cases, received significantly more education than their island-born parents and could obtain more prestigious and better-paid jobs with their greater knowledge of New Zealand society and greater fluency in English. They had made the all-important symbolic transition from blue-collar to white-collar work in a single generation.

These factors combined in different ways in different cases to explain, at least in part, why parents' earlier aspirations were modified over time, and why more New Zealand-born children did not attain some of their parents' early educational goals.

### *Motivation*

Distinguishing between the educational aspirations of parents and those of their children helps to explain outcomes. Some children who were alienated by Eurocentric institutions quickly decided that they could not succeed in formal education and dropped out as early as possible. Others decided that the careers their parents had charted for them held little interest and instead chose others that seemed more attractive to them. In other families, some children were encouraged into valued careers, and others were encouraged to leave school to support their siblings and to subsidize the family's participation in *fa'a samoa*. In some cases this arrangement suited the aspirations of all; in others it generated resentment on the part of those who had to subsidize the success of others.

### CONCLUSION

For reasons connected with linkages between the Christian mission, colonial hierarchies, and formal education, Samoans came to value formal education highly. For some of the early migrants who left Samoa for New Zealand in the hope of finding better education for their children, the dream came true and the move was justified. For others, for a variety of reasons connected with the content and organization of New Zealand education, the labor market conditions that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s, racism, and the requirement to support the home island community, the dream came only partly true. The bases of individual decisions clearly differ, but they do explain at least some of the variance in levels of achievement within the New Zealand-born population.

All of these conditions have changed significantly since the first Samoan migrants arrived. The managers of the New Zealand education system have become somewhat more aware of the existence of cultural minorities and of their responsibilities to them; the labor market has been transformed with the dismantling of measures that once protected it from international competition and the weakening of the labor movement (Kelsey 1993; Roper 1993; Rudd and Roper 1997); attitudes toward Samoans have changed as a consequence of increased visibility and success; the

nature and intensity of links between home and migrant populations have changed with increasing distance, and viable Samoan communities that increasingly command and reward migrant support have emerged in New Zealand (Macpherson 1997).

Some of these changes, such as a more sensitive education system, have been offset by others, such as a tighter labor market. The only way to establish how these changes have affected the type of differentials identified here will be to look at another 40–49-year-old cohort that has been exposed to these and other changes ten years from now. Growing awareness of the complex connection between formal education and social and occupational mobility, and attenuated linkages to communities of origin, may free some resources for investment in education. These are matters of conjecture that cannot be tested with these data or at this time. However, this study provides a baseline against which the consequences of these and later changes can be measured.

This study also points to the need to explain variances *within* the New Zealand-born population. It is clear that some New Zealand-born Samoans have been immensely successful, that their success is visible to Samoans, and that it may play an important role in demonstrating that rapid social and occupational mobility is possible. It is equally clear that other New Zealand-born Samoans have not been successful and are among the poorest, least healthy, and most dependent on the state. Neither the existence of racism nor the effects of structural variables alone can explain such variances since these would be expected to have a concentrating effect. The nature of social diversity and its underlying causes are clearly pressing issues for both policymakers and the academy to explore.

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### *Abstract*

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, people moved from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand in the expectation that their children would enjoy improved life chances, which they believed would follow from improved quality and availability of formal education in New Zealand. The greater educational opportunities would be translated into improved opportunities in the labor market in the form of higher incomes, higher levels of labor market participation, and upward occupational mobility. This paper explores the origins of these beliefs about education and uses statistical data to establish whether the migrants' expectations were realized.

**KEYWORDS:** education, employment, migrants, New Zealand, occupational mobility, Pacific Islanders, Samoans